

Preparing Teachers for the Contemporary Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper focused on preparing teachers for the contemporary Nigeria. Teaching is a versatile field that requires at all times the correct identification of indices of developments in the society. This responsibility makes it imperative that teachers be an embodiment of a constant search for updated knowledge in various fields of Endeavour. The fulcrum of this paper therefore lies on the factors inhibiting teaching profession in Nigeria. This historical approach is used for this study. The findings of the study revealed the fallen standards of education which have been traced to among other factors, the quality of teacher's programmes in the country. This paper recommended an urgent improvement in the programmes for initial teacher education in the country, improved funding of the education sector and complete overhauling of the teacher's education curriculum towards meeting the yearnings and aspirations of the 21st century education n Nigeria.

Introduction

Teaching aims at bringing about changes in the behaviours of learners. Teaching may enhance the effective acquisition of knowledge and therefore some form of education but cannot be regarded as education itself. Teaching is only a means to acquiring education. It involves some activities such as transmuting of information or knowledge, performance of tasks and enrichment of knowledge and beliefs through the interactions of the teachers and the learners.

Teaching is classified into three acts: logical, strategic and institutional. Logical acts refer to such activities as explaining, inferring, concluding and giving evidence. This aspect of teaching is contents based. The strategic acts involve, such as motivating, encouraging, praising and disciplining (Amaele and Amaele, 2003). Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the school and classroom (New World Encyclopedia, 2010). Teacher education is the specialized training given to world-be teachers in a formal school system, so as to equip and nurture them for the great task of teaching. Teacher's education connotes process of preparing teachers for professional roles of reflective practitioners (Achuonye, 2010). Teacher education is very critical because qualitative education cannot be attained by any nation if the quality of the teacher is not enhanced. Ejima (2002) pointed out that the quality of a teacher is dependent on his or her preparation for professional role as distinct-practitioner.

Ololube (2012) also observed that not all teacher education and training programmes aspire to the same high quality standard. In other words, some teacher education programmes and therefore cannot take Nigeria country are not fit to meet the yearnings and aspirations of contemporary Nigeria that the Nigeria national to the promise land in terms of national development. It is against this background policy on Education (2004:26) states that "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers." Hence, the teacher's job is so vital that it has been generally accepted to be the central organ of education.

What is Teacher Education?

A teacher in the professional sense of the word is someone who attempts to help someone to acquire skills, attitude, ideas and knowledge that would create or influence desirable changes in the behaviours of the learners. He is the hub around which the entire education system revolves. Nwagwu, quoting Butts in Amaele and Amaele (2003:18) affirms that "man believes that education has power to set him free but everywhere he is in chain for want of good teachers". For the formal education sector to carry out its mandates effectively for the development of the state or nation, the place of the teachers cannot be overemphasized. In describing education as an agent of development Okorosaye- Orubite (1990) in Pulley (2010:13) states that, "education should transform the child into functional adult". To be functional according to him:

the individual should be given the opportunity to develop his latent potentials to the fullest capabilities to enable him perform those functions (for his benefits and that of his society) for which he is naturally endowed and fitted in times of peace and war. In

essence, education should enable the individual to perform to the best of his capabilities in the competitive world of survival of the fittest.

However, teacher education teacher training is often used interchangeably. The concept of training as used here needs to be explained to make for clearer understanding of its usage in teacher education. Training according to Okeke (2004) connotes learning organized to achieve certain productive skills, development of technical ability, productivity or output, initiative and innovation in the business of teaching.

Nakpodia and Urien (2011) in their part view teacher education as the process which nurtures prospective teachers and update qualified teacher's knowledge and skills in the form of continuous professional development. Oyedeleji (2006) on his part defines teacher education as an amalgamation of institutionalized preparation or further education of persons who are engaged directly or indirectly in education activity. Wikipedia (2010) identified three stages of teacher education which include initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development. The initial teacher education is provided by accredited teacher education institutions or units. Induction is the education and support given to newly qualified teachers in the first few years of teaching to help him or her develops a professional identity and further develops the basic competence not acquired during the initial teacher education in school. This is mostly done by mentoring, peer network and input from education experts. Continuing professional development has to do with in-service education for practicing teachers which include seminars, conferences and workshops. It is therefore expected that high quality teacher education programmers will enhance student's academic achievements and foster further national development.

The Goals of Teacher Education Programmes

According to National Policy on Education (2004), the objectives of teacher education in Nigeria are as follows.

- (i) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system.
- (ii) To encourage further the spirits of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- (iii) To help teacher to fit in to social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- (iv) To provide teacher with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment to changing situations.
- (v) to enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (FRN 2004:39),

To realize these objectives, certain institutions are charged with the responsibility to provide professional training for teachers. These are:

- a. Faculties/ Institutes of Education of Universities
- b. Colleges of Education
- c. The National Teacher's Institute (NTI)
- d. Schools of Education in Polytechnics
- e. National Mathematical Centre and
- f. The National Institute of Nigerian Languages.

The Needs of Teacher Education in Contemporary Nigeria

The socio-economic, technological, political and sundry changes in society have complicated the roles of teachers in the learning environment and society at large, as well as those of teacher educators (Cochram-Smith, 2004, Yasar, 2010). The following list of types of knowledge, skills, dispositions and values are expected to be possessed and mastered by effective teachers:

1. General Pedagogical Knowledge..... Pedagogy has to do with method of teaching. This knowledge should include knowledge of the learning environments, instructional methodologies and strategies, classroom management and knowledge of learners.
2. Subject Matter Knowledge: Teachers in Nigeria particularly at the primary level teach all subjects in the curriculum as such learners never benefit maximally from the subjects where the teachers are weak. The teacher should be a master of the subjects he/ she teaches.
3. Knowledge of the Learners: Teacher should know the learner's context and a disposition to find out more about the learners, their families and backgrounds.

4. Knowledge of how to bridge theory and practice: Teachers should maintain the balance between theory and practice.
5. External evaluation of learning: Teachers should be able to prepare the learners for external examination, guaranteeing success and discouraging examination malpractice as a result of ill-preparation.
6. Multicultural perspective: Teachers should have knowledge, skills and disposition to work with children from diverse backgrounds.
7. Technology application: Teachers should have knowledge and skills and how to employ technology in the classroom learning activities. There is the need to change with the fast changing world. In developed countries, technology is advancing by the day. Information and communication technology (ICT) now drive every facets of human endeavour. For Nigeria to key in to the world fast lane of development, then teacher education must change to produce the quality of teachers who would in turn produce the right calibre of manpower for the nation's scientific and technological advancement (Abraham, 2010). As the world is increasingly becoming more and more of a big global village, scholar's researchers, educators and indeed stakeholders in education have equally demonstrated very strong interest in educational practices of foreign countries (Nwadiani, 1997).

Factors Militating Against Teacher Education in Contemporary Nigeria.

There are many factors inhibiting teacher education in contemporary Nigeria which include problem of quality assurance, insufficient funding, lack of personnel, poor facilities, lack of commitment by government, poor supervision, faulty selection process and poor teacher education curriculum.

- i. **Problem of Quality Assurance:**
Quality is one problem militating against teacher education in Nigeria today. According to Ejima (2012) the situation becomes more precarious in Nigeria where the quality assurance of teacher education is rested on multiplicity of agencies. For instance, the institutes and faculties of education of universities are supervised by the National Universities Commission (NUC), the colleges of education are supervised by National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) while the school of education in polytechnics is regulated by National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). The issue of discrepancies in teacher's professional development is glaring.
- ii. **Insufficient Funding:** Insufficient funding is another major problem of running teacher education programmes. There is Lack of money to provide sufficient infrastructure, teaching materials pay salaries, for maintenance, etc.
- iii. **Lack of Personnel:** At all levels of education in Nigeria, there are no competent teachers in sufficient number. This is a major setback to teacher education in Nigeria.
- iv. **Poor Facilities:** There is dearth of infrastructure in teacher education in Nigeria. Facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, furniture, conveniences, teaching and learning materials are not sufficient.
- v. **Lack of Commitment by Government:** This is another major issue affecting teacher professional development in Nigeria despite the provision in the National Policy on Education (2004) wherein the government pledged to lay more emphasis on teacher education and development as priority agenda in Nigeria Ekpefa. Abdullahi

(2011:4) in observing the state of the education sector in Nigeria lamented that:

it is very disheartening that despite Nigeria is long history of various attempts of providing quantitative and qualitative education to its citizenry and having been recognized as one of the richest countries of the world by virtue of her oil production and sales. Nigeria stills remains underdeveloped and a member of the E-9 countries where the citizens are dissatisfied with its educational system).

In the same vein, Paulley (2005) in Ekpefa – Abdullahi (2011:2) stated that:

the success or otherwise of any educational programme (or system) in any country towards the attainment of the above goal to a large extent lies in the effective planning and commitment on the part of the political leadership towards such programme (or educational system) as it is this that will determine the degree of success or otherwise of the programme at the implementation stage, it is for the above reason therefore, that there is no gainsaying in the fact that the level of commitment and innovation by the political leadership of a country is very crucial in the actualization of national set objectives both for the citizenry and the nation at large.

(vi) **Poor supervision:** This is a crucial area within the school system where both the content method and mode of delivery and the personality of both the students and the teachers are examined to ensure their adequacy. This is moribund in Nigeria. The supervisors stay tight in their offices and seldomly visit schools. The checks and balances expected from supervisions are not achieved.

(vii) **Faulty selection process:** It is a common knowledge that in Nigerian universities, most applicants choose to study education as a last resort when they cannot meet up with the requirement for their courses of first and second choices. Admission seekers prefer courses such as medicine, law, engineering, nursing and even single honours in the sciences, arts or social sciences to education. This practice has made education “a dumping ground” where candidates who lack both the aptitude and attitude to become teachers (molders of lives) are dumped. This practice spells doom for the future of the country-socially, economically and politically.

In the same vein, Okebukola (2005) in Ijaiya (2008) reveals that:

over 80% of persons surveyed through the questionnaire felt that education graduates produced the last ten years “have no strengths”. In facts, the impression one gets form the reports is that these graduates have nothing to offer as teachers because they were even rated low in the few areas where they were said to be positive such as willingness to learn (11.6%), punctuality to school (5.4%) and ability to discipline (8.0%). A whopping 74.2% said they had no “visible strength”.

The above situation is really pathetic, absurd and unfortunate.

- (viii) **Poor teacher education curriculum:** One of the critical issues in teacher education is the curriculum for initial teacher's education programmes. In fact, the report of the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) (2010) gives a rundown of the issues as follows:
- ❖ The teacher training curriculum in the country does not fully acknowledge the new age environment in school and classrooms in terms of constructivist learning, learner-centred instruction and integrating technology into the processes of teaching and learning.
 - ❖ There is gap between the curriculum taught to teacher trainees and the reality that exists in schools. Such realities include dilapidated school buildings, lack of instructional materials, including textbooks and writing materials for the pupils, and sometimes overcrowded classes.
 - ❖ The emphasis on content delivery, examination and certification over real learning are also a serious threat to quality. The current system of teaching and evaluation does not allow creativity, innovation and research, obtaining educational qualifications to any level relies heavily and primarily on corrupt practices,(which include examination malpractices, sexual harassment by some lecturers on students and by students on lecturers while some rely on monetary inducement to make their way through their programmes)
 - ❖ Only 10% of enrolment in the colleges of education offers primary education studies, while the remaining 90% offers single or doable major courses. This leaves a dearth of qualified teachers at the primary school level.
 - ❖ There is also the quantity and quality of input for teacher training programmes. Most youths in Nigeria are not motivated to teach and often opt for teaching as a last resort, that is after failing to secure admission into lucrative courses such as law, medicine, engineering and banking since the admission cutoff marks for these courses are generally high and that for teacher education low, there is the perception that individuals who opt for teaching are not academically sound.
 - ❖ Poor preparation and poor recruitment of lecturers, results in a lack of professional development opportunities for lecturers. In addition, in-service training for basic education teachers consists primarily of programmes to provide upgrading or certification through distant “sandwich” courses.
 - ❖ The teaching force in Nigeria is heterogeneous.

All these have contributed to the fallen standard of education in the country in no small ways. There is therefore the need to make sure that only teachers with the minimum of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) qualification are employed to teach at whatever level of education in Nigeria. The teaching profession has to borrow leaf from what is obtainable in other professions like law, engineering, accountancy and medicine where no one “jumps” into these professions without acquiring the minimum basic professional requirements stipulated by the professions.

Conclusion

Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures to equip teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively and efficiently, in the schools and classrooms. The purpose of teacher education is to produce more effective, efficient and highly motivated teachers to tackle the onerous task of helping someone to learn. Teacher education as a seamless continuum consisting of three stages initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development. The contemporary teacher in Nigeria is bedeviled with myriad of problems which must be tackled to enhance social, political and economic developments of the nation.

Recommendations

To ameliorate the various issues militating against teacher education, the following recommendations are proffered. They are:

- (1) There is need for an upward review of the budgetary allocation to teacher education.
- (2) There is need for adequate teachers at all levels both in quality and quantity.
- (3) The various institutions saddled with the development of a virile teacher education programmes should search and select the best brains not drop-outs.
- (4) The post-graduate diploma in education (PGDE) and the Nigeria Certificate in education (NCE) run by the National Teachers institute should be overhauled A commission or agency specifically for teachers should be established.
- (5) The governments at all levels should provide adequate facilities and infrastructure for teacher education to meet the requirements of global best practices.
- (6) The departments of supervision in both federal and states ministries of education should rise up to their responsibilities to enhance quality assurance.
- (7) Government should refocus and redouble her commitment towards the revitalization of teacher education programmes in Nigeria.
- (8) Development of strategy for ICT in the training of teachers must be put in place and reviewed regularly. The effective participation of all and sundry in the education sector is highly recommended because education is right of all and should therefore be the responsibility of all.

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